

Saga

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

CHAPTER
EIGHT



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Saga

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A NIGHT TIME SMOKE

with matching indifference, they watched the purple stain's relentless march across the helpless rug.

"Will you judge me if I open another bottle?"

"I will, though I think you'll approve of the verdict," Eames said.

Contessa went to uncork something with a duck on the label, while Eames fisted couch cushions in search of the remote.

"Hey, did you tape *Cake Haters*?"

"Shit," she yelled from the kitchen. "Sorry, I spaced."

Eames just shrugged, as Contessa returned to refill their glasses.

"It's fine. This season has kind of sucked anyway."

"I know, right? Hey, should we go to your brother's opening instead?"

"Definitely not," he smiled.

Eames then patted the beaten seat next to him, and a grinning Contessa took her place to his right.

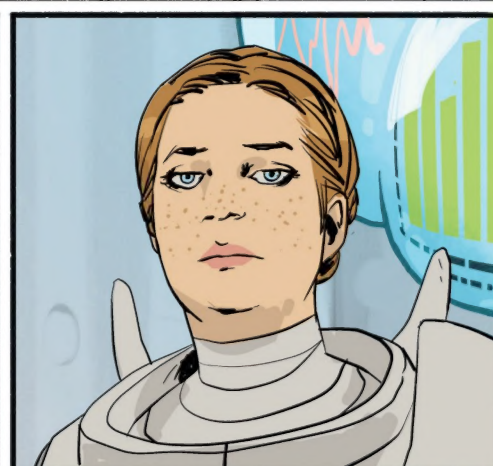
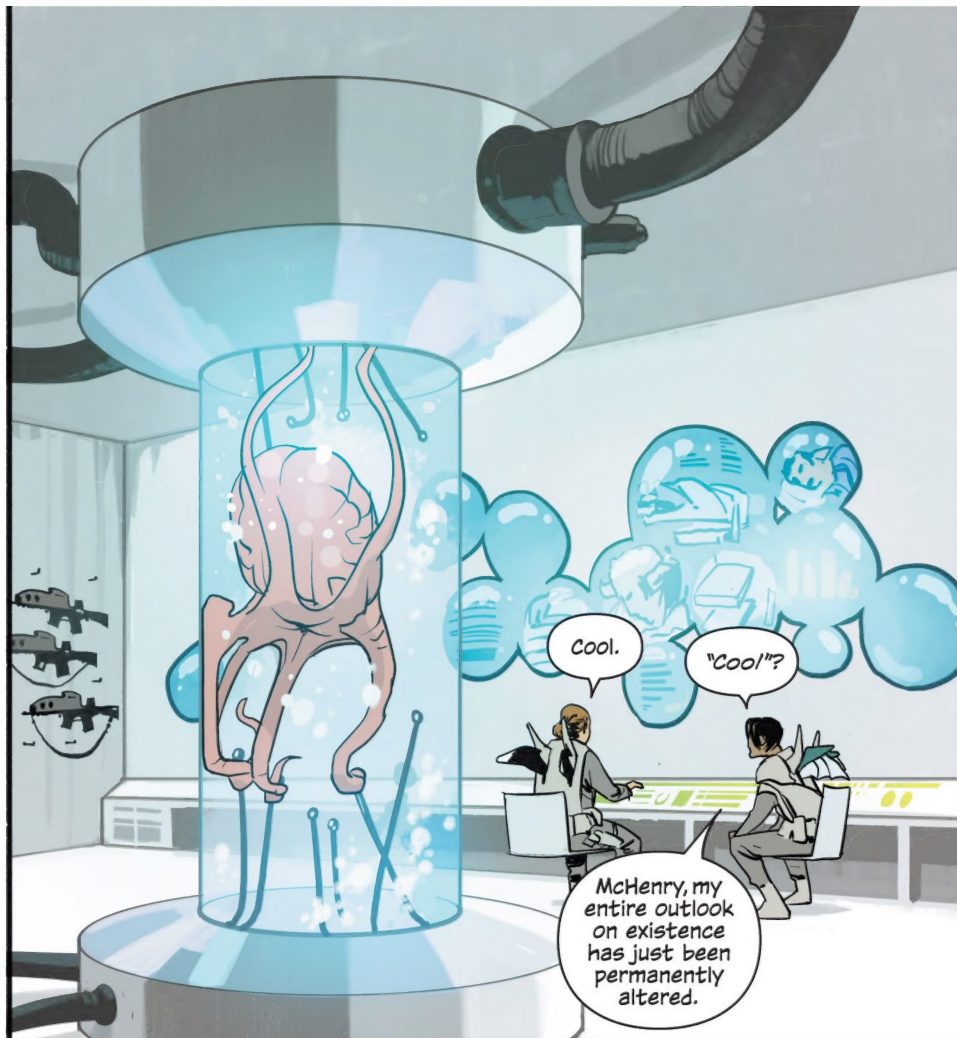
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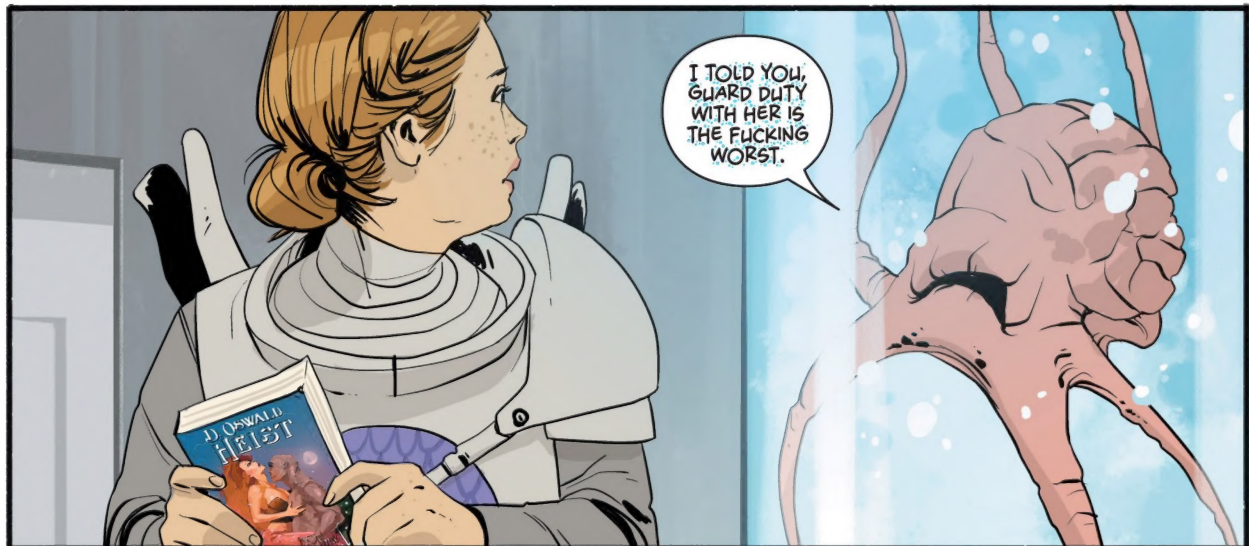
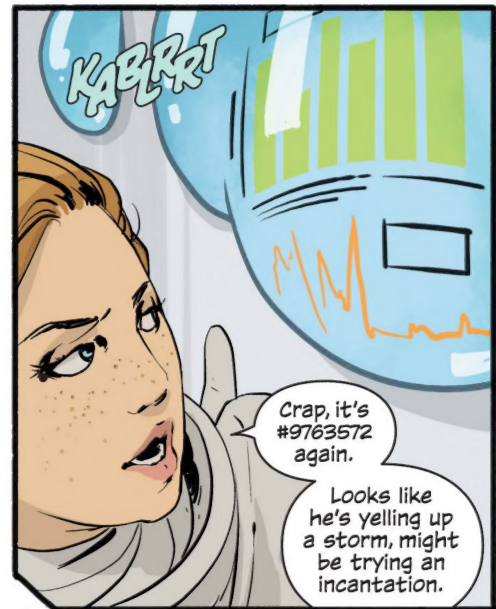
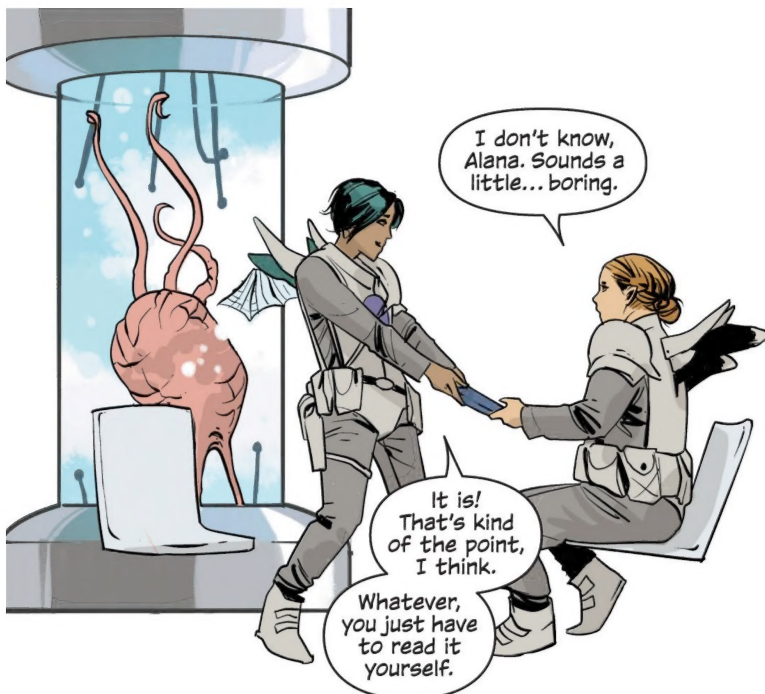
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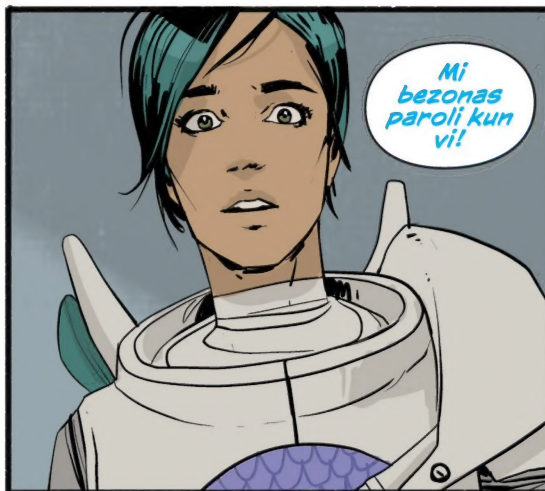
Holy.

Fucking.

Shit.

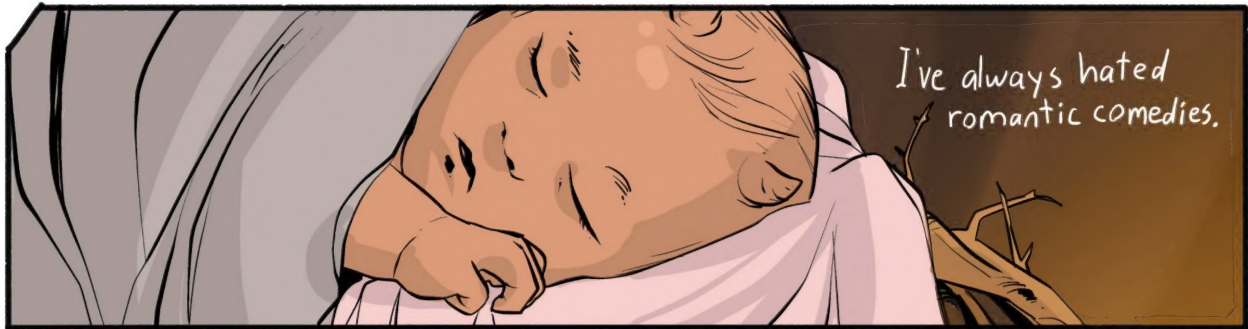




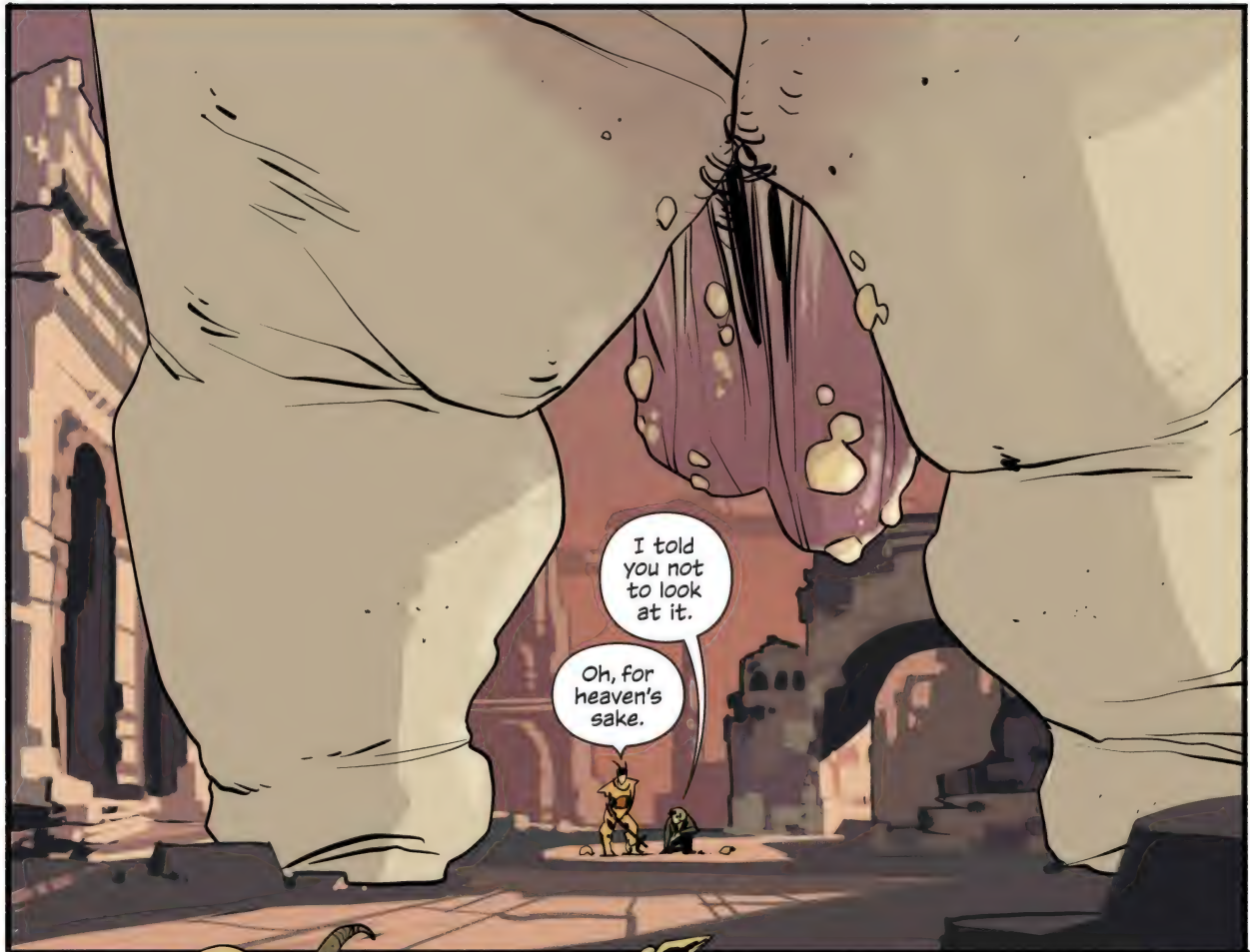








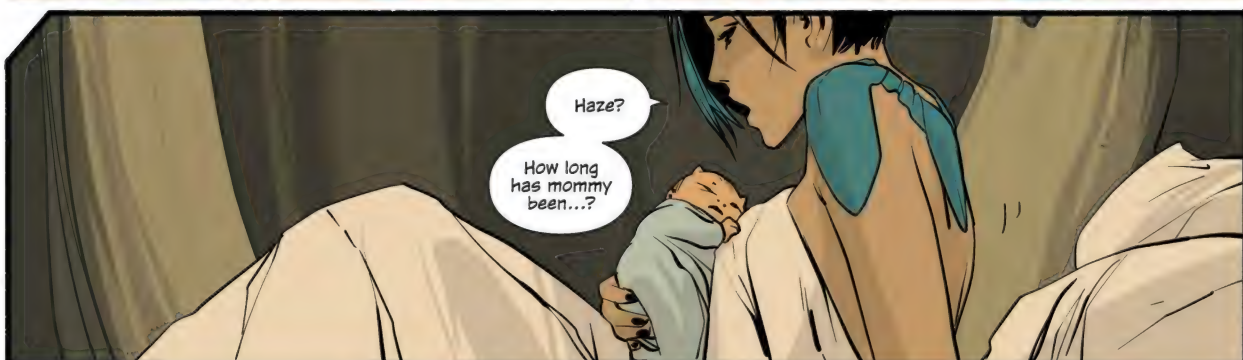
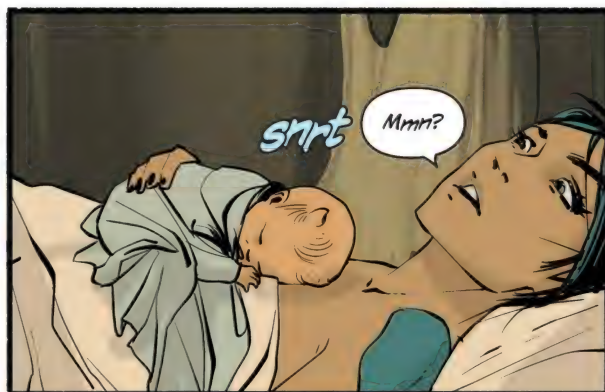


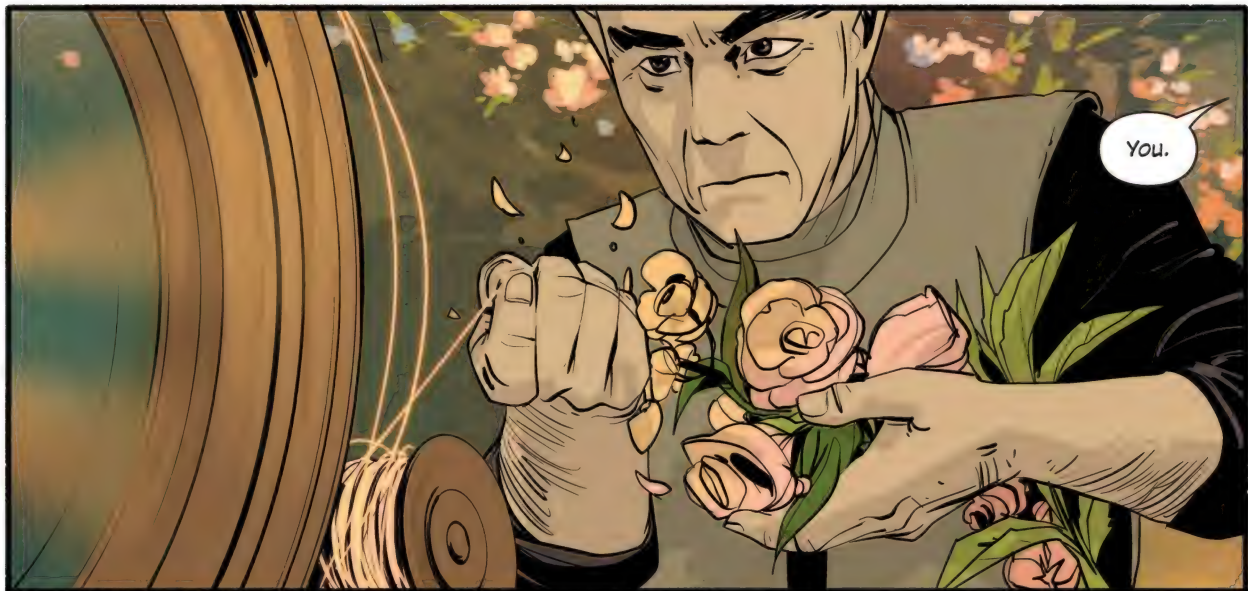


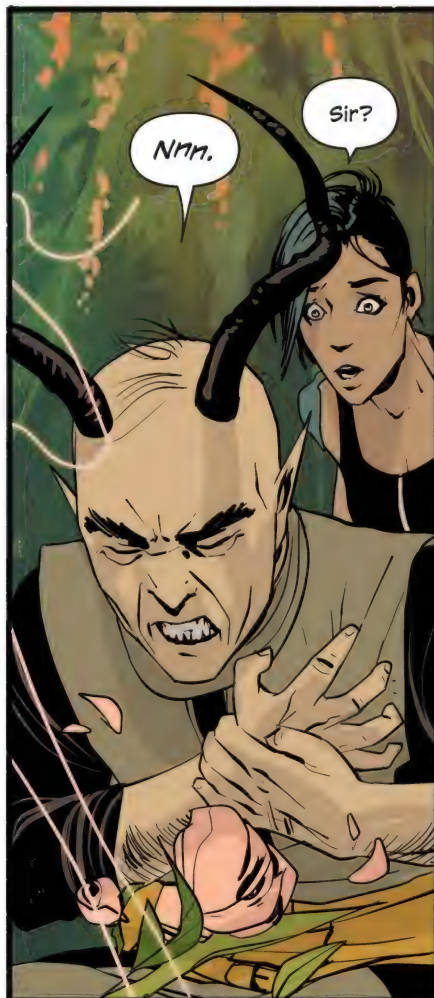














My father once told me that your first grandchild is nature's reminder that your warranty's about to run out.

He died less than a year after Marko was born.



There's no cure for my illness, Alana. One day very soon, my heart will just stop working. It's not something I'm looking forward to, but I've made my peace with it.

But how can you keep it a secret from Marko?

From your wife?



Because I don't want my final days in this universe to be filled with pity and sorrow.

I want to spend this time doing what I like best for the people I care about most.

But...you don't even know me.



Maybe not, but lord do you ever talk in your sleep.

It's clear you love my boy very much.



I haven't always.



Oh?

At first,
he annoyed
the shit out
of me.

Marko can be
a self-righteous
ass, he has no idea
how to sit still,
and worst of all,
he laughs at his
own jokes.



Then why
did you risk
everything
to be with
him?



Because
your son is
so goddamn
beautiful.



Ha.

I assure
you, looks aren't
forever.

Oh, I
know.



I wasn't
talking about
his looks.



Good morning.



How are you feeling?

FARD WILL EAT YOUR SOULS AND PISS THEM OUT FARD'S ANUS!

Wonderful, this should make for sterling conversation...

If you help us, I give you my word we'll free you at once. We're looking for my infant's babysitter, the ghost of a teenage girl.

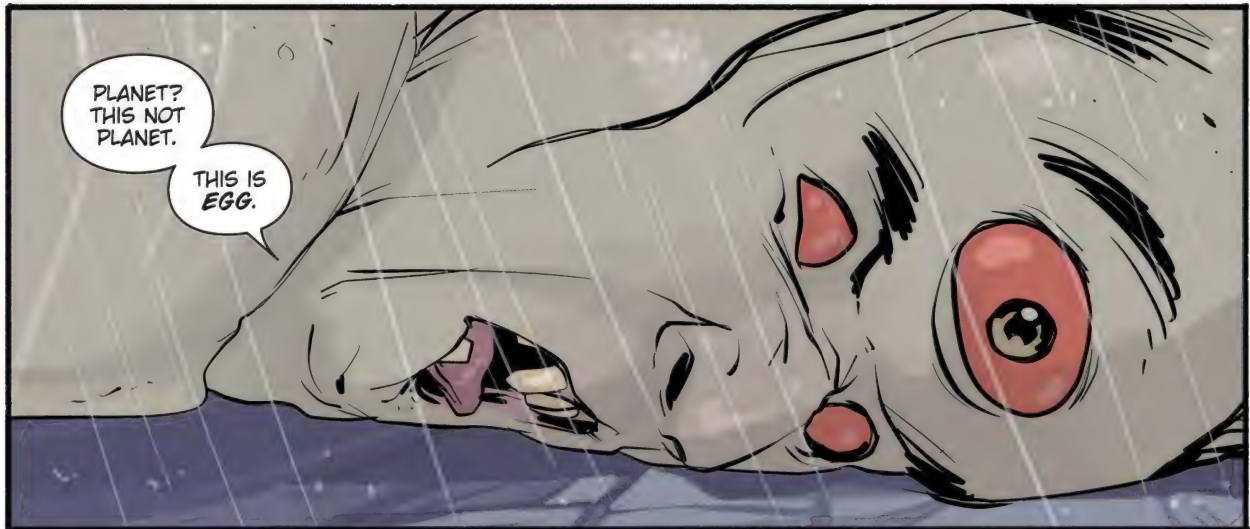
Half a teenage girl, I suppose.

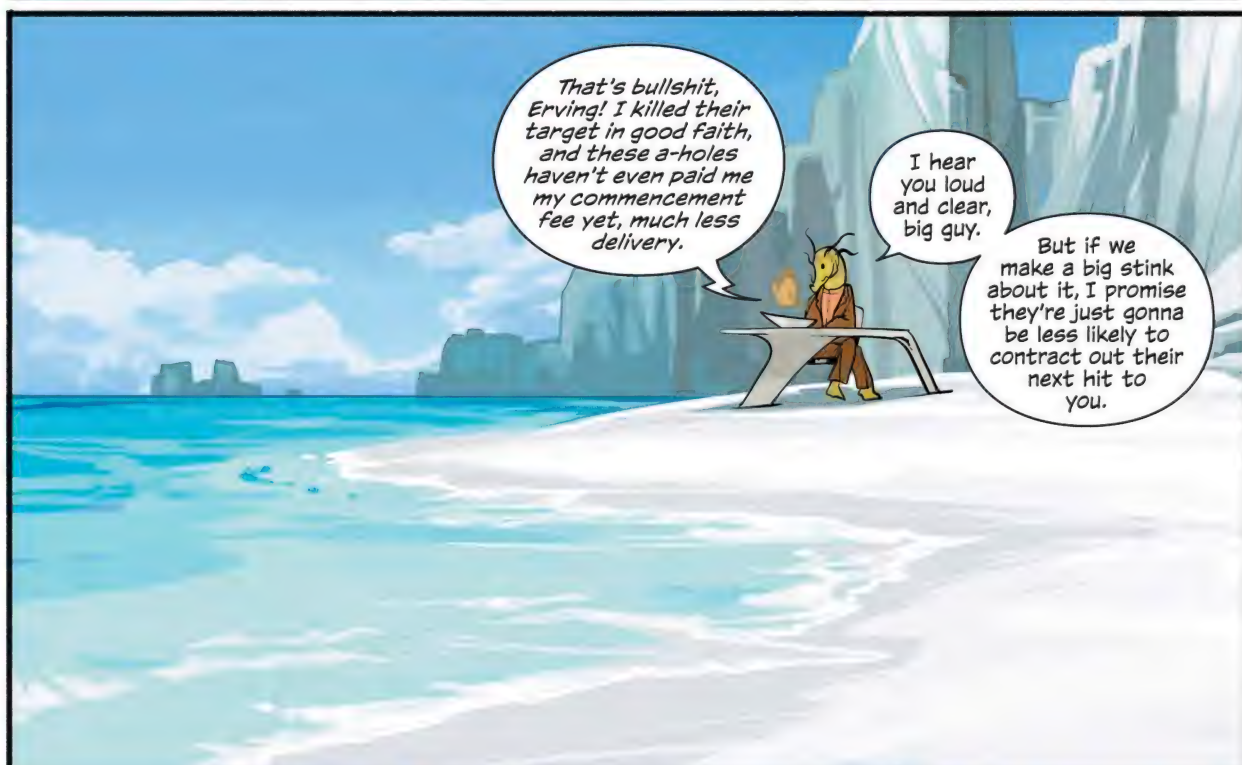
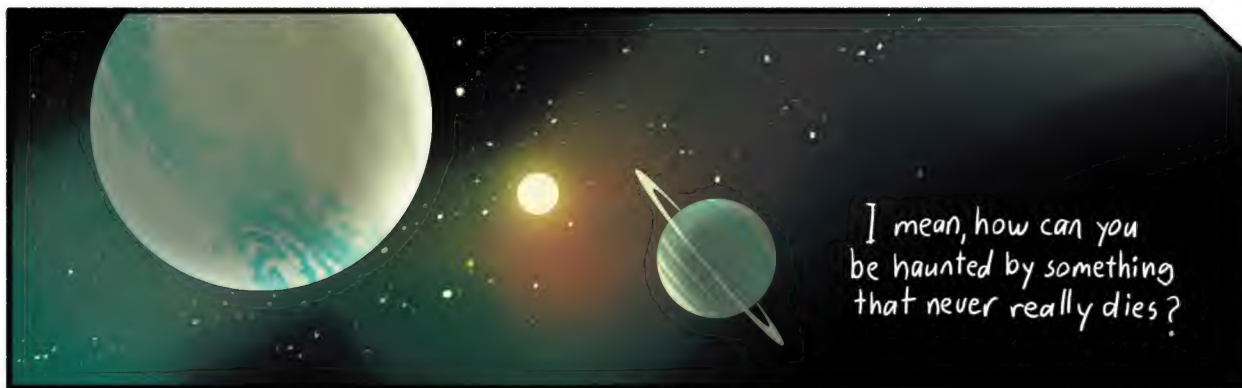


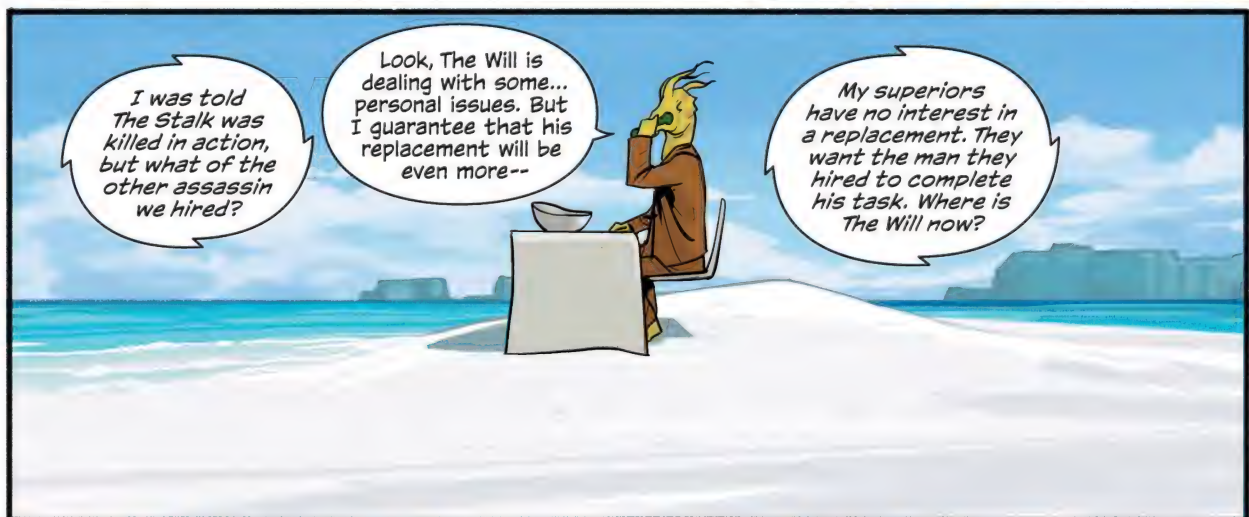
HRRN. FARD SAW LITTLE PHANTOM. WANDERING SHADOW CITY.



BUT YOU NEVER REACH HER BEFORE THE BIRTH.









Hello.
My name is
Gwendolyn.

TO BE CONTINUED

4335 VAN NUYS BOULEVARD • SUITE 332 • SHERMAN OAKS • CA 91403

Oh, so THAT'S who the fuck Gwendolyn is. Good to know.

Hey, Brian here, writing this in the days leading up to our triumphant release of Chapter Seven. The *To Be Continued* offices are eerily quiet as we wait to hear what you think of our second arc, but for now, let's dig deep into the ol' mailbag to Lewis Black a few of your past letters that may have fallen through the cracks.

Before we do, that New York Comic Con was a surreal weekend of delightfulness, huh?

To give you a taste of the insanity, check out the one-of-a-kind SAGA-MOBILE created for the show, with art by Fiona, designed by Image's own Drew Gill as some sort of promotional shebang for Chevrolet:



Did anyone actually win this thing? Is someone really driving

around town with a breastfeeding alien on the hood of his or her tiny automobile? If so, respect!

Anyway, it was great to share a drink or twelve with so many of my old friends and coconspirators, especially Hollywood's own Garth Ennis, who apologetically showed me this parody cover for an upcoming issue of *Dicks*, the filthy humor book Garth does with his obscenely talented *Hitman* collaborator John McCrea for our pals at Avatar:



Lovely, right? I own almost no original artwork from the comic books I've worked on over the years, but I begged John to let me buy this cover from him. You know you've made it when Ennis/McCrea start taking the piss...

Most importantly, I got to catch up with the legendary Fiona Staples herself at the show, and while the two of us don't agree on much, I learned of at least two things that the One Who Staples and I both love:

1) *Hawkeye* – From Matt Fraction and the incomparable David Aja, Marvel's newest ongoing series is intimidatingly excellent. Christ, that comic makes me feel old-fashioned!

and

2) *Dredd 3D* – The best comic-book movie of the year. An old-school hard-R sci-fi flick, this feels like it was made in 1987, and as a huge *RoboCop* fan, that's some of the highest praise I can give. The only thing better than Karl Urban never taking off his helmet was Olivia Thirlby never putting hers on. Great work, all!

While we were gabbing, Fiona and I also had the honor of meeting so many of you fine folks, especially those of you talented weirdoes who came dressed as our characters (our

upcoming Costume Contest promises to be the greatest event in human history!!!).

Huge thanks to all the volunteers and staff at Image, especially Eric Stephenson, who helped run a really fun, really packed *Saga* panel. If you missed out, just imagine Fiona providing concise, thoughtful insight while her co-creator rambled incessantly with the nasally drone of Ray Romano's Muppet avatar.

Speaking of Fiona's brilliance, let's jump right into things with what is easily our most frequently asked question...

Dear Fiona and Brian,

Just finished Chapter Three of Saga and was blown away by the artwork of the scenes in the cave and Izabel and the other ghosts. If they aren't heavily guarded secrets, could Fiona talk about what she uses to illustrate and her process a little? As always, amazing work, both of you.

Love,

Matilda

Andover, MA

Thanks, Matilda! To finally reveal all the shocking secrets of her process, here's Ms. Staples herself:

• FIONA'S PROCESS •

Hi, everybody! A few people have asked about how I create the 100% digital art for *Saga*, so here's a quick look at my method. While I've worked digitally for several years now, I've never done a comic exactly like this, so the whole thing is one intense, ongoing experiment. A lot of the time I feel like I have no idea what I'm doing. But don't let that stop you from enjoying this tutorial.



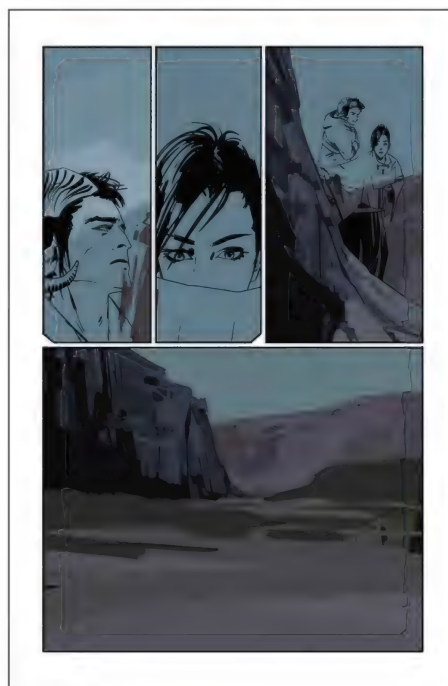
1. I do my thumbnail layouts on paper, on templates that I've printed out. They're quite roughly drawn and I don't bother with reference. Brian is the only one who really needs to understand them, and he already knows what's supposed to be going on, so no problems so far! I do spend a lot of time thinking about the layout though, and how best to stage

everything. This is probably the most important part of the whole process.



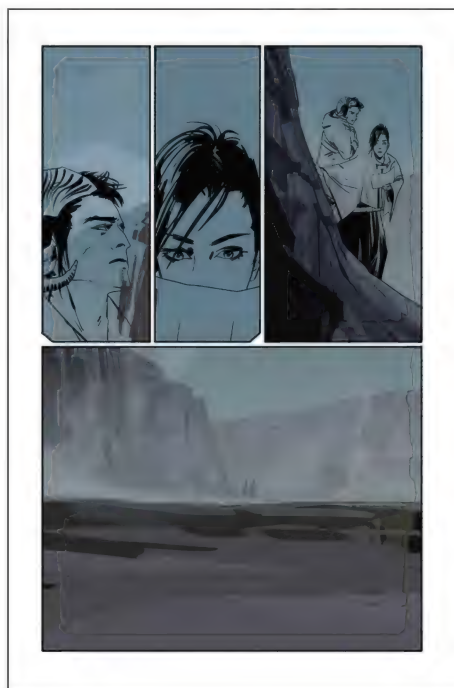
2. I scan in my thumbnails, blow them up, and use them as rudimentary pencils. Then I start "inking" over top of them in Manga Studio. To me, working digitally means you can forego tight pencils, because it's so easy to erase and correct your inks as you go along. I super duper hate doing detailed pencils and then inking them, because nothing is more boring than drawing the exact same thing twice.

In *Saga*, I ink only the figures, and leave the backgrounds to be painted in during the colouring stage. I shoot a lot of photo reference of myself to help nail the poses. I also find that physically imitating the characters makes it easier to draw them convincingly.

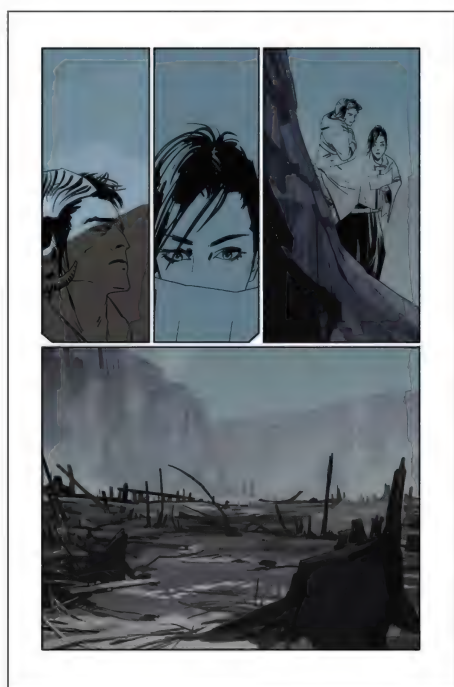


3. I import the line art into Photoshop, then start painting in

the backgrounds behind it. This can take a really long time depending on the complexity of the environment, but I'm always looking for ways to speed it up while increasing the level of finesse. Like I said, an ongoing experiment!

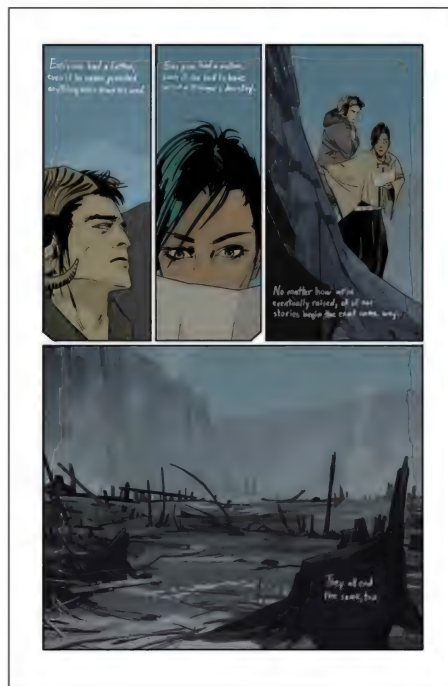


For outdoor environments, I generally start by choosing a colour palette and blocking in the shapes very roughly. Here, I started with the distant hills, added a bit of smoke and haze to push them farther into the background, and then drew all the stumps and debris in the foreground.



4. Next, I colour in the figures. I use flat colours on them a) because it's faster and b) because I think painted figures in comics can often look stiff. I want the eye to be able to "read" the figures in *Saga* very quickly, and get the gist of what they're doing/saying/feeling without stopping to examine detailed shading or whatever. Don't get me wrong, I love looking at

beautifully detailed artwork—in fact, I love it TOO much, and I usually find myself staring at the page for so long that the story loses all its momentum. So I try to place information-dense panels (the few that I have time for!) strategically within the story, often at the beginning of a scene.



Finally, I scrawl in Hazel's narration in my charmingly childlike printing. There's one page down, twenty-one to go!

•

Fascinating, huh? Fiona is a genius, yet she has no idea how to correctly spell the word "color."

Seriously, when I first started working in comics, I would fax a hard copy of my script to a penciller, who would then mail physical pages of artwork to an inker, who would send those inked pages to our letterer, who would actually PASTE handwritten balloons directly onto the artwork, before somebody else entirely got to work coloring the whole thing.

The fact that Fiona does so much of this on her own (with support from our designer/letterer Fonografiks!) blows my mind, to say nothing of the fact that all of this rich, warm, humane artwork exists only as ones and zeroes in the digital realm.

Fuck your jetpacks, this is already way more future than I can handle...

BKV –

*QUESTION #1: If you could hang out with any character in *Saga*, who would it be and what would you do?*

*QUESTION #2: Which two characters (one from *Saga* and one from *Y: The Last Man*) do you think would be friends in real life (well, comic-book life)?*

*Keep up the great work,
Mike,
New Jersey*

Sweet! Numbered questions, the reliable workhorse of the funny-book letter column!

ANSWER #1: My kids really like ghosts (or at least humans

wearing blankets over their heads), so I guess it might be fun to play with Izabel for an afternoon.

ANSWER #2: Yorick would probably want to be friends with just about the entire cast of Saga, but I honestly don't think anyone would be all that eager to friend him back. So instead, let's go with... Lying Cat and Ampersand.

Hey there, guys!

Long time fan of BKV here (sent you a note years after the end of Y: The Last Man and you even replied!), and now obviously a diehard fan of Lady Fiona and the rest of the team. Amazing work you're doing there.

I gotta say it's very special to read Saga having a newborn girl myself (she was born on September 1, and I started reading Saga a week later). I have to concede: spot on with the baby stuff! Lots of parallels (my girlfriend is Austrian, I am Spanish, we met in Belgium and... well, that's it, I'm no magician and our countries are not at war). Learning and enjoying the ride. Could use a ghost babysitter, but I guess I'm okay with no freelancers looking to kill me.

Anyway, Saga is AMAZING!

Thanks,

Guayec

Graz, Austria

Congrats to you and your better half, Guayec! Your daughter is mind-bogglingly gorgeous.

And hey, apropos of nothing, we also got a fantastic letter from an inmate named Mike at the Low Security Federal Prison in Beaumont, Texas. He was nice enough to include a list of the prices at his prison commissary in case I ever wanted to plan a shopping trip at the hoosegow.

Given the nature of Mike's crime, I didn't want to publish his full letter without permission, but it made me wonder if there are any other inmates out there who somehow have access to our bawdy series?

If so, please write in! We'd love to hear from you, regardless of what you're in for.

To Be Continued,

Over the summer, I worked with inner-city youth in Hartford who attended a school called A.I. Prince Technical High School. I have no idea who "A.I. Prince" was or what made him technical, but since I've been reading Saga, I like to imagine he's some relation to Prince Robot IV.

All the best,

Eddie G.

Glastonbury, CT

Well, Eddie, if only to prove that any letter can be a winner, my trusty wiener dog Hamburger K. Vaughan has selected YOU as this month's lucky recipient of something-or-other from the Almighty Prize Drawer!

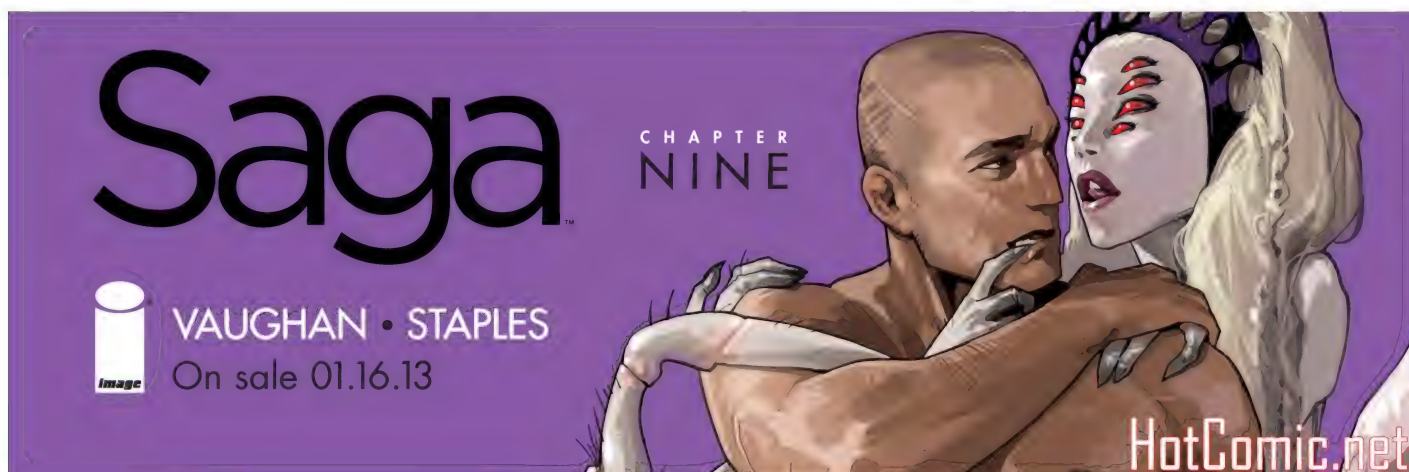
(And before I forget, back in Chapter Six, Burger awarded some copies of Runaways to one Tiffany Navaro, but her prizes were returned as she had apparently moved. If Tiffany would please send us her current address, we'll get your hard-earned goodies out to you ASAP!)

Anyway, Eddie, for sending your missive at just the right window of opportunity, you've won: a signed copy of this very issue, my old membership card to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (become a new member online today to get a personalized postcard from yours truly!), a playing card from my hero Harry Anderson's most-recent appearance at The Magic Castle, the laminated Bible passage my kids received in lieu of Halloween candy from a creepy old neighbor woman, and finally, a copy of this rare alternate cover to Saga #7 drawn by the astounding Paul Pope and colored by Fiona:



And speaking of The Stalk, won't you please consider joining us for her unexpected return to these pages next month? If you're good, Gwendolyn might even come along for the ride...

More in thirty,
BKV



Question of the Month

"WHAT WOULD YOU WANT YOUR SUPERPOWER TO BE AND HOW WOULD YOU USE IT?"

"I'd love to have that Benny Hinn power to knock people out with power of the Lord. I'd never stand in line again."

Justin Jordan
THE STRANGE TALENT OF LUTHER STRODE

"I would love to have the ability of never getting tired, 'no fatigue' at all and will want to trek from one corner of the earth to the other, with my atmosphere proof respiratory system, and nano enabled art supplies, one go non stop stint, add a few rides with the whales and a bit of conversation with the yeti on the snow clad peaks. This is if I'm denied the ability of expanding and contracting time."

Abhishek Singh
KRISHNA: A JOURNEY WITHIN

"I'd want the power to teleport. If I could cut out all the time I spend getting from one place to another, I could get more scripts done."

Ron Marz
ARTIFACTS

DECEMBER 2012

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THE THIRD DEGREE BRIAN WOOD

Image Comics published Brian Wood's first series, *Channel Zero*, in 1997 to considerable critical acclaim, and Wood has continued to produce comics and graphic novels at a brisk pace ever since. Focusing almost entirely on creator-owned works, he's become one of the most notable creators of the last decade. He's earned multiple Eisner Award nominations and editions of his work have been published in close to a dozen foreign languages. He is most known for original series such as *DMZ*, *Northlanders*, *Demo*, and *Local*.

Starting in 2012, Wood kicked off the second major phase of his career with the original series *The Massive* and *Anthem*, as well as *Star Wars* and *Conan the Barbarian* for Dark Horse Comics and *The X-Men* for Marvel. His creator-owned collaboration with artist Ming Doyle, *MARA*, will be published by Image Comics in December.

What are you working on right now?

I'm getting notes from an issue of *X-Men* from my editor, and planning on knocking out a *Star Wars* script by the end of the week. I'm actually heading to a *Star Wars* convention this weekend, and then by Monday I have an *Ultimate X-Men* due. (And since this interview took me a couple days, separated by a week, to complete, here's bonus answer: today it's an issue of *The Massive*.)

What's the best part of your job?

The best part is always the fact I can work at home, in my own space, in a (mostly) quiet house and still feel connected to my family. I stopped having to commute and sit in an office ten years ago and I'm still grateful on a daily basis. Any time that I have a stress dream, it's always about that: going back to a day job in a cubicle.

What's the worst part of your job?

Deadlines. There's a lot of perks to being a comics writer, but one of the biggest responsibilities, if not THE biggest, is that everyone else is counting on me to deliver work so they can eat. The writer's at the top of that assembly line and nothing moves if I screw up.

How did you first discover comics?

I was in art school, majoring in illustration, and someone told me that these editorial illustrators I knew and liked — Dave McKean, Kent Williams, Bill Sienkiewicz — also made comic books. So I got a late start, but I came into it the right way: seeking out creators and their creator-owned work.

If you weren't working in comics, what would you be doing?

I'd still be working in design, I'm sure. I had a career doing graphic design for the videogame industry before I quit to go write comics. I'm sure I'd be sitting in a cubicle somewhere hating my life.

What's the best thing a fan has ever said to you?

I'm sure I'm forgetting some awesome story, but something I hear a lot is that one of my books was the gateway drug for someone's friend or girlfriend or boyfriend, or that one of my books was what got someone back into comics after a long time away. That's really the best compliment, that one of my books made someone love comics. Hard to top that.

I did, however, just find out that I met Jordie Bellaire, colorist on *Mara*, at some show when she was THIRTEEN and sold her a copy of one of my books. I've never felt older.

Who is the biggest influence on your work?

I don't know. Haha! I don't know how to answer that. It's not any one thing, or one person. My work is sort of all over the place in terms of tone and subject matter and I think my inspiration is probably just as varied.

What is the single work of which you're most proud?

Local and *Northlanders*. I can't pick just one. Right now, it's those two books.

Own up to one of your guilty pleasures.

Wheeling and dealing on eBay, mostly vintage guitars and related equipment. That's not really a thing to be guilty about, but the volume and frequency I have going on probably is. Its best if no one knows the details.

What was the last comic book you bought?

Probably Peter Bagge's *RESET* from Dark Horse. I have an open subscription to the Dark Horse Digital store so everything there is available to me for free, but I still bought *RESET*. Peter Bagge is a creator I unconditionally love; his *HATE* was the first series I bought and read, and he's earned a lifetime of loyalty from me.

If you could be someone else for a day, who would it be?

I don't even want to be someone else, but I do wish I had other people's talents.

Pick three things you couldn't live without.

The Pogues, Wilco, the Jesus and Mary Chain.

What's the strangest thing you have in your house?

I'm way too boring to have oddities and curiosities in the house, to be honest. Well, I do have a set of taxidermy coathooks made out of deer legs, which my wife finds horrifying, but that's the sort of thing I grew up with so I actually think it's comforting.

What makes you laugh?

Most things make me laugh at some level, which is a good thing. I think it's how I keep sane.

What is one of your favorite places?

I grew up in Vermont, and each time I visit I fall more and more back in love with the place.

What music are you listening to these days?

I grew up listening to exclusively folk, both American and Celtic, and until I was allowed to buy my own music, which was probably age 14, that's what I listened to. That, and the Beatles, thanks to my older sister. In recent years I've been rediscovering all that folk and finding a lot of comfort in it and I feel pretty blessed to have had that exposure early on and for so many years. Not to sound like a snob, but I'm happy to have been raised with that level of music but the sort of stuff my own kids seem to be attracted to, which isn't all that bad but its pretty shallow in comparison to someone like Pete Seeger.

Who is your best friend?

My wife, of course.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

As it pertains to the business of comics, there is one bit that rises above all else: no one cares about your book more than you do. That sounds sort of bland and general, but especially when dealing with original creations, you need to be very careful with what you own.

When was the last time you were truly frightened?

I have a really bad habit of daydreaming these horrible worst case scenarios and playing them out in my head. I think I must do this as some sort of subconscious-level catharsis, but when I carry my little kid down the stairs, sometimes I think about tripping and falling, sustaining injuries, the ER, and so on. It gets grim and often really freaks me out. Why do I do that?

What would you like to see happen in comics in the next 12 months?

A big increase in digital readership in sales and the direct market remaining unaffected. Then we can all relax a little bit, realize there is nothing to worry about, and get on with it.

MARA #1 (OF 6)



The story of an especially gifted woman in a sports- and war-obsessed future. Young Mara Prince is at the top of the world, a global celebrity in a culture that prizes physical achievement above all else. After she manifests supernatural abilities on live TV, she becomes famous all over again but for the worst reasons.

HIP FLASK: OUROBOROS



LADRON, Eisner award winner for his work on *HIP FLASK: MYSTERY CITY*, returns for the penultimate issue in the series. Sahara is dead, but both Hip Flask and Obadiah Horn are determined to save her!

BLACKACRE #1



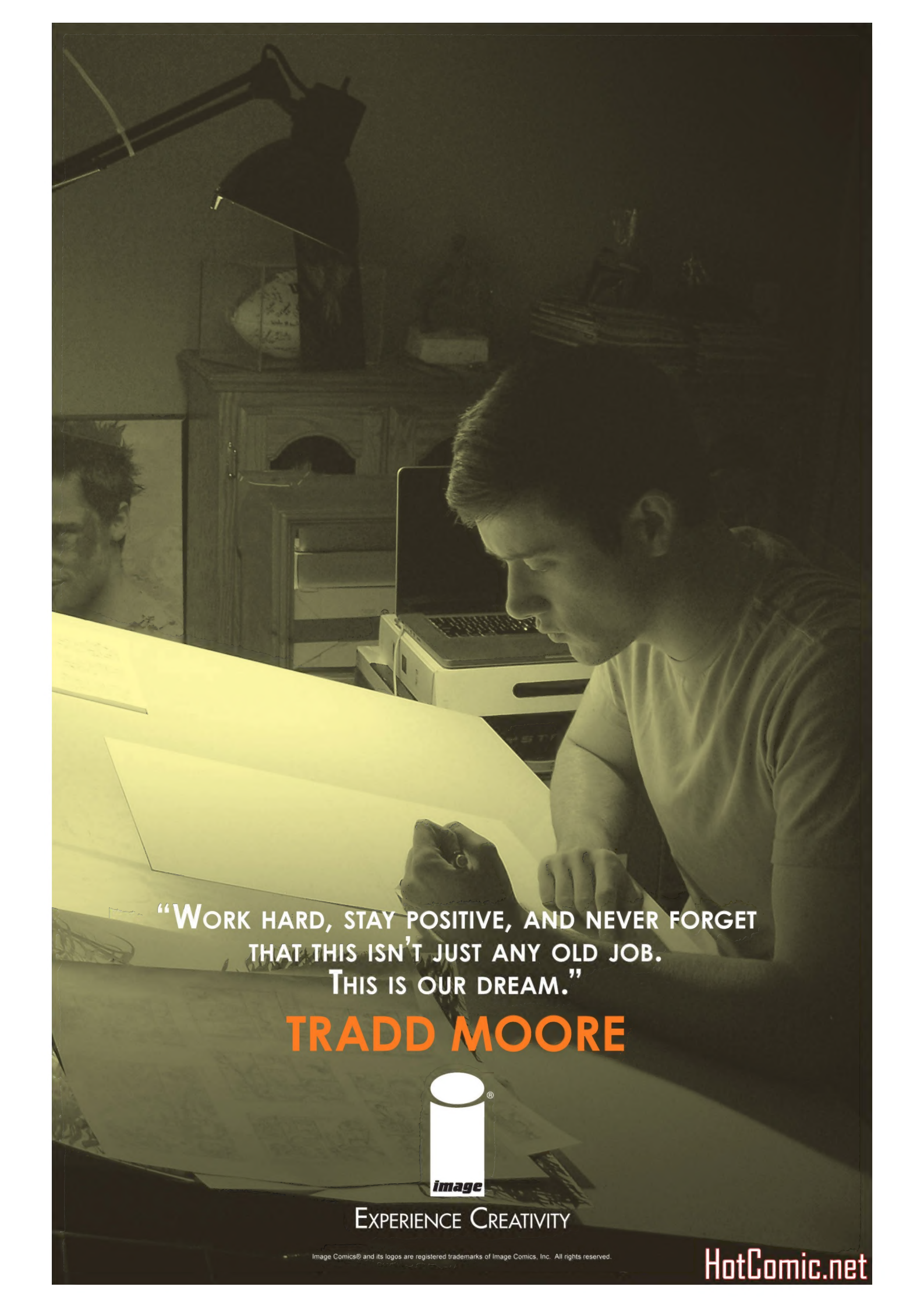
100 YEARS AFTER THE FALL... A NEW GREAT GAME BEGINS. A retired soldier on a secret mission... sent out from the walled city and the only life he's ever known into the violent wilderness of the world after the fall! Tribal cults, roaming hands of barbarians, vicious warlords! A startling new take on the post-apocalypse and the most auspicious comics debut of the year!

THE LEGEND OF LUTHER STRODE #1



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